

OFFICIAL TITLE:

Effectiveness of Narrative Therapy in Reducing Anxiety and Depression
among Middle School Students in Refugee Camps in Northern Palestine:
A Quasi-Experimental Study

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CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Mustafa Shouli

AFFILIATION:

Ibn Sina College for Health Professions,
Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education

STUDY LOCATION:

UNRWA-operated middle schools in Jenin, Balata, and Askar Refugee Camps,
Northern Palestine

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

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Introduction

We are inviting your child to participate in a research study. Before you decide, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and ask questions if anything is unclear.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary. Whether you choose to participate or not will not affect your child's relationship with their school, teachers, or any other services.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether a 10-week narrative therapy program can help reduce anxiety and depression symptoms among middle school students (grades 6-9) living in refugee camps in Northern Palestine.

Narrative therapy is a type of counseling that helps people tell their stories in a new way, separate themselves from their problems, and build on their strengths. This program has been adapted to include Palestinian cultural themes such as *sumud* (steadfastness), olive tree symbolism, and traditional storytelling.

Why Is My Child Being Asked to Participate?

Your child is being asked to participate because they are a middle school student (grades 6-9) at a UNRWA-operated school in one of the participating refugee camps (Jenin, Balata, or Askar). They have been identified as having moderate-to-severe symptoms of anxiety or depression based on a screening questionnaire.

What Will Happen If My Child Participates?

If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be assigned to one of two groups:

Group	Description
Intervention Group	Your child will participate in a 10-week narrative therapy program with weekly 60-minute group sessions (10 students per group). Sessions include storytelling, drawing, group discussions, and activities about resilience using Palestinian cultural themes like <i>sumud</i> (steadfastness) and olive tree symbolism.
Control Group	Your child will receive standard school services (regular educational activities, social skills activities, music/art therapy, and sports activities as typically provided in UNRWA schools).

All participants (both groups) will complete questionnaires about anxiety and depression at three time points:

Time Point	When
Baseline	Before the program begins
Post-test	After 10 weeks (immediately after the program)
Follow-up	Three months after the program ends

Each questionnaire takes approximately **15-20 minutes** to complete. The questionnaires ask about feelings, thoughts, and behaviors related to anxiety and depression.

What Are the Possible Risks?

This study involves **minimal risks**. Some students may experience mild emotional discomfort when discussing personal experiences related to anxiety, depression, or conflict. The activities are designed to be supportive and empowering, not distressing.

If your child becomes distressed:

- Trained facilitators will provide immediate support.
- Your child will be referred to UNRWA school counselors or partner mental health clinics for additional help if needed.

- During the study, seven participants received referrals and continued without any problems.

What Are the Possible Benefits?

While there may be no direct benefits to your child from participating, the program may help reduce anxiety and depression symptoms. The findings from this study may also help develop better mental health support programs for Palestinian refugee adolescents in the future.

Will My Child's Information Be Kept Confidential?

Yes. All information collected during this study will be kept confidential.

- Your child's responses will be **anonymized** (no names or identifying information will be linked to the data).
- Data will be securely stored for three years after the study is completed at Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education, Department of Nursing.
- The results of this study may be published, but **your child's identity will not be disclosed**.
- Only the research team will have access to the data.

Is Participation Voluntary?

Yes. Participation is entirely voluntary.

- You and your child may **refuse to participate** without any penalty.
- You may **withdraw your child** from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- Withdrawal will **not** affect your child's relationship with their school or any services they receive.

What If I Have Questions?

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Dr. Ibrahim Aqtam (Principal Investigator)	Dr. Mustafa Shouli (Co-Investigator)
Email: ibrahim.aqtam@nu-vte.edu.ps	Email: mustafa.shouli@nu-vte.edu.ps
Phone: +970 9-2591884/7	Phone: +970 9-2591884/7

If you have concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact:

Research Ethics Committee

Ibn Sina College for Health Professions

Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education

Nablus, Palestine

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

I, the undersigned, have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers.

I give permission for my child to participate in this study.

- ☐ **Yes**, I give permission
- ☐ **No**, I do not give permission

(Please check one box)

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Student Assent (For Students 12 Years and Older)

I have understood the information about this study. I agree to participate and understand that I can stop at any time without any problems.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Research Staff Use Only

Staff Member Name: _____

Staff Member Signature: _____

Date: _____

What to Do With This Form:

1. **Parent/Guardian:** Complete the Parent/Guardian Informed Consent section.
 2. **Student:** Complete the Student Assent section (if 12 years or older).
 3. **Return the completed form** to the research team.
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Thank You

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Your child's involvement will help us understand how to better support the mental health of Palestinian refugee adolescents.